

WEDNESDAY 11 January 2017

Aussies wasting time and money on pricey fad diets

New research shows many Australians are turning to costly quick-fixes for weight loss, prompting dietitians to warn against wasting money on short-lived weight loss results.

The national survey of 1,033 Australians aged 18-64 years, commissioned by Australia's peak body for nutrition professionals, the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA), found nearly half (46 per cent) of adults had actively tried to lose weight in the past year.

And of those who had tried to lose weight, around half (47 per cent) did so by spending their money on a specific diet or diet program.

The results come in the lead-up to DAA's tenth annual Australia's Healthy Weight Week (13-19 February 2017), which raises awareness of the tailored advice and support Accredited Practising Dietitians (APDs) can offer.

DAA Spokesperson Professor Clare Collins said many popular 'diets' come with meal plans and programs, priced at up to \$200 for eight weeks.

But she said it's not just the sign-up costs that pull at the purse strings, with many diet plans pushing costly recipes and ingredients that are similar, or nutritionally inferior to, healthy everyday options.

"Coconut oil pops up in many popular diet plans these days, but it's around four times the price of heart-healthy olive oil, and 'sugar-alternatives' like maple syrup, at \$9.00/100ml, will hurt your hip pocket, without saving you kilojoules.

"And beware of products piggybacking onto health trends, like Paleo and protein bars, some of which will set you back \$3.00 for a tiny 40g bar, whereas you can buy an apple for less than a dollar," said Professor Collins.

She said the dust will settle on diet books and the shine will fade with diet 'programs', leaving many people back to square one with their eating habits, often at risk of regaining any weight lost.

"The greatest success is seen with ongoing counselling and support. Studies comparing different diets, such as the 5:2 diet and a reduced-kilojoule diet, show that weight loss slows once dietitian follow-up stops, regardless of the diet followed. Having that regular touch point for support is key," said Professor Collins.

Geoff Furlong, a 56-year-old project manager from Sydney, gave up on one-size fits all diets this year when he decided to see an APD for weight loss.

"Previous diets were just 'weight loss attempts,' treating a few of the symptoms rather than dealing with the real issue. But life is longer than eight weeks. If you want to make a real, lasting change, you have to make real changes to your lifestyle. Few of us are able to do this on our own. For me, seeing an APD has been invaluable and has taught me skills and strategies to manage my weight long term," said Mr Furlong.

ENDS

For further information or to organise an interview with Clare Collins, contact Felicity Curtain, Dietitians Association of Australia, on 0409 661920.

Background: Australia's Healthy Weight Week (AHHW), run by the Dietitians Association of Australia from 13-19 February 2017, is the perfect time to kick-start healthy eating habits.

In 2017, dietitians will be educating Australians that there's a healthy weight that's right for them, whilst raising awareness of the support that Accredited Practising Dietitians can offer in inspiring good health.

The week will focus on getting Australians cooking more meals at home and eating the right foods, in the right portions, as smart ways to help achieve the best weight possible.

Award-winning celebrity cook, Callum Hann, and Accredited Practising Dietitian, Themis Chryssidis (both from Sprout), are supporting AHHW in 2017. Sprout will be urging all Australians to be healthy and confident cooks in their own kitchen. Dr Andrew Rochford, medical expert and media personality, is also an ambassador of AHHW.

For more information, including the AHHW Instagram Cooking Challenge and the new bumper edition AHHW cookbook, plus nutrition tips, recipes, event details and a social media toolkit, see the AHHW website at healthyweightweek.com.au and follow AHHW at www.twitter.com/DAA_feed and use #AHHW2017.

AHHW 2017 will kick-off with a launch event in Sydney on Monday 13 February.

Note: Australia's Healthy Weight Week 2017 is proudly supported by Meat and Livestock Australia, Healthy Food Guide, CanPrint, Australian Mushroom Growers Association, Australian Chicken Meat Federation, Xyris, McKenzie's Foods, and Almond Board of Australia.

Fast facts:

-  The latest National Health Survey (2014-2015) found 63.4% of adults are overweight or obese, this equates to 11.2 million Australians. Looking a little deeper the survey found seven out of 10 men (70.8%) and just over half of women (56.3%) are overweight or obese¹.
-  The same survey found only 7% of Australian adults meet the recommended daily serves of vegetables, and just 49.8% meet the Australian Dietary Guideline's recommendation for fruit¹.
-  According to Australia's latest National Nutrition Survey (2011-2012), more than 2.3 million Australians (13%) aged 15 years and over reported that they were on a diet to lose weight or for some other health reason. This included 15% of females and 11% of males².

References

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2015). National Health Survey: First Results, 2014-15. Retrieved from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.001-2014-15-Main%20Features-Overweight%20and%20obesity-22>
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2014). Australian Health Survey: Nutrition First Results – Foods and Nutrients, 2011-2012. Retrieved from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.007-2011-12-Main%20Features-Key%20Findings-1>